



Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah

Obstacles that Prevent One from Making Repentance

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Taken from the book at-Tawbah

*By the great Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn
Taymiyyah*

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Our business is information, knowledge, and wisdom. People read books for these reasons. If you only have information and knowledge about one human being in your life, knowing about the prophet Muhammad (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) is one most beneficial. Everything he did was beneficial. Everything he said was beneficial. Everything he showed his Companions and rest of the world was beneficial. No ones life was studied closer and more in detail than his. He let his worship of Allah to be the subject of study. He lived and showed us how to live, how to deal with each other, how to deal with our neighbours, how to deal with our husbands and wives, how to have a relationship with our Creator. The salvation of ones soul is the most important thing in a Muslims life, thus evil is concealed within the soul and it necessitates actions of evil. If Allah lets the servant have his own way with his soul, he will perish at the evil of his own soul and evil actions that it sanctions. If Allah on the other hand, grants the servant success and assists him, he will deliver him from this all. Calling ones self to account is of two types: a type (that occurs) before the

action and a (type that) occurs after the action. As for the first type, it is to take a stance when one first has an intention and desire, and not to embark upon the action. And as for the second type, which is to take account of ones soul after the action. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

“Indeed, he succeeds who purifies it (i.e., his soul)”.¹

(9)

The great Qur'an translator At-Tabari mentions in his *tafsir* regarding this beautiful ayah; Allah the Most High says that indeed, he succeeds who purifies his soul. So he greatly purifies his soul from *kufr* (disbelief) and disobedience and rectified it though righteous actions.² Also Ibn Qayyim relates that Hasan al-Basri said: He succeeds, who purifies his soul by rectifying it and directing it towards obedience of Allah and he fails, who ruins it and direct it towards disobedience of Allah.³ Allah also says:

“And indeed, he fails who corrupts it (i.e., his soul).”⁴

(10)

¹ Sura ash shams (91) 9.

² *Fath Rabb al-Bariyyah*, page 66.

³ Refer to Ibn Qayyim's book *Ighaathah al-Lahfaan*, 1/65

⁴ Sura ash-Shams (91) 10

Also At-Tabari then relates from Mujahid who said regarding this *ayat*, means, misguided it. Then he relates that Qutaada said about this *ayat*, means, and caused it to sin.⁵ Furthermore, our beloved Prophet used to teach his companions (*Khutbatul-Haaja*) the speech of need): All praise is for Allah; we praise Him. Seek His aid and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the **“evils of our soul”** and wickedness of our actions.⁶

Sins are a substantial obstacle hindering the way to attainment success, Shaykh ibn ‘Uthaymeen says: some matters that protect a person from sins and help him to remain distant from them and not to fall into them are knowledge of their dangers, what they give rise to, their evil consequences and extreme harms.⁷ Ibn Rajab said says regarding repentance, that if a person repents to Allah and truly meets the conditions of repentance, then Allah will definitely accept that repentance from him in the same way he accepts a disbeliever embracing Islaam. This is the opinion of the majority of the Scholars and Ibn ‘AbdulBarr even gives some indication that this is a consensus on this point.⁸ Ibn Al-Qayyim said regarding sins: alienation between the slave and his Lord, lack of remembrance of Allah, corruption of the heart, deprivation of knowledge, squandering ones time, anxiety

⁵Tafseer at-Tabari, 15/212-213.

⁶ Muslim

⁷ For further reference go to Shaykh ibn ‘Uthaymeen book *Fath al-Bariyyah*, page 65.

⁸ Ibn Rajab in his book *Jaami’ul-Uloom wa’l-Hikm*, vol/1,418.

and sorrow constriction of the chest, hardship of life and gloominess of circumstance, hardness of the heart, lack of correction of opinion, concealment of the truth, are a result of sins/disobedience.⁹ Mujahid said, everyone who disobeys his Lord; is an ignorant person until he comes away from that sin.¹⁰ So the prophet as well as he taught us how to pray, and he taught us how to fast as well as how to perform *hajj* as well as *umrah* and the likes, has also taught us how to get closer to our Lord. One of these ways was through repentance, we must learn, not only to follow the Prophet in ritual acts of worship but also in spiritual acts of worship which consist of one purifying ones soul, we must learn to put into practice the whole conduct of the Prophets life and not just in acts of worship as above mentioned. We must also learn and study those things which will bring about our success and bring us closer to Allah and closer to his pleasure. By the grace of Allah, he has Allowed me to translate this short brief treatise from Arabic to English so as to uncover the treasures of Ibn Taymiyyah works which have been hidden from us and our tired worn down souls for many years. I thank those who helped me in this work. I hope Allah accepts this work from me and it becomes a proof for me and not against me and ask Allah by his greatest names to make it be a benefit for my beloved brothers and sisters, Indeed Allah has the power to do all things.

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⁹ Ibn Qayyims book *al-Fawaa'id*, page 62. Also see *Jawaab ul-Kaafee*, page 46

¹⁰ *Al-Fataawa*, Ibn Taymiyyah, 7/22.

Jordan, 'Ammaan, March 3 2006

The linguistic definition of *at-Tawbah*: Whoever sought repentance renounces a certain matter. Hence, is to return from a certain action.

The Divinely Legislated definition of *at-Tawbah*: The act of returning from the disobedience of Allah, the Most High, to His obedience.

The Scholars mentioned the act of seeking penitence is deemed obligatory for every sin committed. If the act of disobedience has occurred between the slave and Allah the Most High, and is not connected to the human rights, then the conditions are three:

[1] The First condition: The individual discontinues the disobedience.

[2] The Second Condition: The individual regrets his act.

[3] The Third Condition: The individual resolves never to return to the act.

If any of these three conditions are not fulfilled, the act *at-Tawbah* is not actualised. If the act of disobedience is connected to another individual, a the forth condition involved,

[4] The Forth Condition: The individual is obligated to absolve himself from the victim.

It is a most upon the individual to seek repentance for his sins. If the individual seeks repentance from a portion of them, his taw bah is considered correct according to the ‘ulama for those particular sins. However, that which he remains doing, continues to remain with him

Until him repents from the particular sin.

OBSTACLES THAT PREVENT YOU FROM MAKING REPENTANCE

DISREGARDING ONES SINS

From the things that prevent one from making *Tawbah* (repentance), is paying little concern with the sins one commits, belittling the sins one falls into, thinking one does not have to make repentance from them, considering they carry a light punishment. And this is a sign of one being mislead and astray, and we ask Allah for health and strength. Anas said: You indulge in (bad) actions, which are significant to you than a hair while we considered them at the time of the messenger to be great destroying sins.¹¹

So is it not befitting for the one who has belief in Allah and his messenger to underrate his sins, which he commits, but rather he should consider them to be great and this will enable him to make *Tawbah* (repentance) and become remorseful over whatever sin he commits. Al-'Awzaa'ee used to say: the major sins are the sins one commits then consider it to be small/underrates it. And also he used to say, a man persisting upon a sin is sign he considers it to be small sin.¹² Ibn 'Abbaas said: any sin a

¹¹ Bukhaari /6492) Musnad of Imam Ahmed 3/ 285 and Aboo Ya'laa 7/212(4207) 1213(4314) Al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan* 5/454(7208).

¹² Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/429.

person persists upon is a big sin, and no sin a person repents from is not a big sin.¹³ Ka'ab said: the slave commits a small sin and belittles it, feeling no remorse of neither repenting from it. And it becomes something considered great in Allah sight, and the slave can commit a sin and show great remorse for it and repents greatly from it and in Allah sight deems it to be small and by which he forgives him for it.¹⁴

Fudayl bin 'Iyyad said: depending on how much one underrates a sin will depend how great it is with Allah. And any sin one deems to be great/a destroying sin, will be deemed in Allah's sight be a small sin.¹⁵

REASONS WHY ONE UNDERRATES HIS SINS

- Weak understanding of Allah's Greatness Power and Lordship.**
- Being Heedless of Allah and Punishment.**
- Weak Eemaan and lack of Taqwa (consciousness) of Allah.**
- Having a sick and corrupt heart.**
- Forgetting ones sins and lack of Tawbah (repentance).**

¹³ Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/428

¹⁴ Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/428

¹⁵ Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/428

As' sari said: true *Tawbah* (repentance), is not to forget your sins.¹⁶ One of the ways the lead to destruction is that one forgets his sins. Bilaal ibn Sa'eed said: Don't look at any sin as being insignificant, rather, Look at the greatness of the one you disobeyed.¹⁷ And this is the difference between a true believer and a weak sinner. The true believer looks at his sins, as though they were mountain about to fall on top of him. But the weak Sinner looks at his sins as though they were a fly on his nose, and he just waves them off with his hand.¹⁸ So, if the slave underrates his sins and belittles them, he will never have remorse over what sins he commits. For a person to recognize the greatness of his sin, three thing must occur, Firstly, him knowing the greatness of the affair, Secondly, knowing the greatness of the one who lays down the order and who he is disobeying, And lastly, belief one being held to account for what one does whether good or bad.¹⁹

HAVING MANY EXPECTATIONS²⁰

Yahya ibn Mu'ath: The thing that prevents the people from making *Tawbah* (repentance): many expectations.²¹ Shaytaan always strives to discourage the believer by saying to him: take you time with regards to this, what is

¹⁶ Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/428

¹⁷ Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/430

¹⁸ Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/411

¹⁹ Ibn Qayyim in *Madaarij-us-Saalikeen*, 1/203

²⁰ Having many hopes, which will make one think he'll have ample time to make *tawbah* and do righteous deeds.

²¹ *The Dispraise of Al-Hawaa (desires)* by Ibn Qayyim 1/216-217

the rush, you have all the time in world, so Shaytaan, deceives and makes him procrastinate, so the slave dies while sinning.²²

It's narrated that Ibn 'Abbaas said with regards to this verse:

"The Hypocrites) will call to the believers:" were we not with you?" The believers will reply:" Yes! But you lead yourselves in to temptations; you looked forward for our destruction."

{Sooratul-Hadeed-14}

يَنَادُونَهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ قَالُوا بَلْ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَسْتَمِعُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ
وَتَرِبَصْتُمْ وَارْتَبَتُمْ وَعَرَتُمُ الْأَمَانِيَّ حَتَّى جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ
وَعَرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغَرُورُ
سورة الحديد(14)

"But you lead yourselves in to temptations"
وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَسْتَمِعُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ

Said means: with desires.

Says, with regards to tawbah, the statement of Allah:

"And you were deceived by false desires."
وَعَرَتُمُ الْأَمَانِيَّ

²² *Tablees Iblees*, p.486 by Ibn Qayyim.

Means, you procrastinated, with regards to righteous deeds.

“Allah Till the Command of comes to pass”.

حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ

Says Means: till Death over took you.

“And the chief deceiver deceived you in respect of Allah.”

وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغَرُورُ

Means: Shaytaan.²³

So the steadfast, upright believer should make good use of his time, and not procrastinate and turn away from living a life of longing and hoping and expecting so much in the future. Some of the *salaf* used to say: be weary or procrastinating always, delaying and putting off things, for indeed it is some thing from Shaytaan and his forces. So this is the example of the steadfast believer who lives a life minimizing his expectations and hopes, and his example, is that of a group of traverses, upon there travels, and they arrive at a town, and settle to prepare, requiring what they need, then they move on to there next destination. And this is the example of the believer in this world; he is only just passing through, so he only takes from it what he will need for his journey and has no time to do too much procrastinating and delaying ever opportunity that passes his way.²⁴

²³ Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/462-463

²⁴ *Tablees Ibless* by Ibn Jawzi, p.486

ALWAYS RELYING UPON THE MERCY OF ALLAH

Abu Ali Ru'thabaani said one of the things many are misled by, is relying solely upon the mercy of Allah. And by doing so, they leave off making *Tawbah* (repentance), due to the fact of them believing Allah will always have mercy upon them.²⁵ So the worse of the people are those who consider their sins not to be great and they are by this misled into believing Allah is Most Forgiving. Umar ibn Thar'ra said: oh people who wrong themselves, by disobeying there Lord, don't be misled in to believing Allah will always be merciful to you. Be weary of such a delusion, because Allah says

“So when they angered us, we punished them, and drowned them all.”

{Soorutul-Zukhruf-55}

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(55)

Ibn Qayyim said: oh you who are misled into believing Allah is Always Merciful, Shaytaan was cursed for ever, and expelled from that which he was in, because of a simple order, to prostrate. And what was Adams sin? Was it not a small sin? Was it a big sin? By his sin was not Adam expelled to from the garden? Was it not because of a small morsel of food? Does it not show that a small sin

²⁵ *The Dispraise of Desire* by Ibn Qayyim 1/187.

can destroy one for ever, as did with the case with Iblees?²⁶ So don't think you can't go to the hell fire for one sin you commit because Allah says:

"So he feared not the consequences thereof."
{Sooratul-Shams: 15}

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقَبَاهَا

سورة الشمس(15)

Did not a woman go to the hell fire because of how she treated her cat?

A man might say a single word, and by it be thrown deep into the hell fire.

HEEDLESSNESS²⁷

One of the greatest reasons why one falls into sins is due to carelessness.

Being heedless of Allah, being heedless of Allah's punishment, and one not being preoccupied in these two, one will live a life of misery and destruction.

The only way one can free himself from being heedless of Allah, is to be reminded, as Allah says:

²⁶ *Al-Fawaa'id* Ibn Qayyim, p.90.

²⁷ Remembering Allah very little/one being Heedless all the time of Allah.

“Therefore remind (man) in case the reminder profits (them).”
{Sooratudh-Dhariyaat: 55}

وذكر فان الذكرى تنفع المؤمنين

الذریات (55)

Muhammad ibn Yunus said: We were with Za'heer Al-Baani, when a man said to him: Advice us oh Aboo AbdurRahmaan? Who replied to them: be weary upon which state you die upon, and that you don't die in a state of negligence

THINKING ALLAH WILL NOT EXCEPT ONES (TAWBAH) REPENTENCE

Allah says;

**“Oh (my Slaves) who transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins!)?
Despair not of the mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, he Most Forgiving Most Merciful.”**

{Sooratul-Zumar 53}

سورة الزمر (53)

So it is not befitting that a true believer distances himself from *Tawba* (making repentance). And do not

despair and think Allah will not accept you (*Tawbah*) repentance. This is not a sign of a true believer, and leads to destruction.

Indeed Allah is the Most Merciful, who always forgives his repenting Slaves, and none despairs from the Mercy of Allah except the Disbelieving people. What one is ordered to do is have a good opinion of Allah in all his affairs, even in the last moments of his life.

And it is narrated from Nu'maan Ibn Baseer who said regarding the Statement of Allah:

“And do not throw yourselves into destruction”
{Sooratul-Baqarah: 19}

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(195)

If any of you sins, he shouldn't throw him self into destruction, by saying Allah will not forgive me, Rather he should ask Allah for forgiveness, for Allah forgives all sins.

A man once asked Baraa' Ibn Hazm, Oh Aboo 'Ammaar, the statement of Allah:

“And do not throw your hands into destruction”
{Sooratul-Baqarah: 190}

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(195)

Is this referring to a man, who throws himself into destruction by meeting and fighting with his enemies until they kill him?

Nu'maan replied: No, this is not what is meant. Rather, what is meant, is that a man commits a sin, and then says, Allah will not forgive me. This is what it means.²⁸

THINKING ONE IS SAVED DUE TO HIS MANY DEEDS²⁹

The slave is misled in to believing due to the fact that he has many religious deeds, he will be saved, regardless of whatever sins he commits. So he understands from the statement of Allah, *The Most High*:

“Verily, the good deeds remove the evil deeds.”
{*Soorah Hood: 114*}

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(114)

²⁸ Bayhaqi in *Shu'bul-Eemaan*, 5/407

For further reference go to *Ihsaan'ul thun bil'la* /Good opinions of Allah by Ibn Abi Dunya

²⁹ Being misled due to the fact that one does many goods deeds

So he gives up making (*Tawbah*) repentance altogether.

Ibn 'Awn said: Don't rely just on your many deeds, because you don't know whether Allah will accept them or not.

And don't feel you're saved, by the mere fact, that you've made (*Tawbah*) repentance.

Because, is there a guarantee, Allah will except your (*Tawbah*) repentance?

Because your actions are concealed from you, and you don't know what Allah does with them, maybe they could be recorded amongst the successful or maybe they could be recorded amongst losers, doomed to the fire.

**Taalib Ibn Tyson
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